



State of Arizona  
Department of Education

Tom Horne  
Superintendent of Public Instruction

July 29, 2003

Dear Superintendents and Principals/Chief Administrators:

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome you to the 2003 Arizona Accountability Communications Workshop. Since taking office this past January, I have emphasized the Department of Education's responsibility to serve Arizona's districts and schools as we strive to meet our goal of increasing the academic achievement of *all* our children. The development and implementation of this workshop reflects not only my desire to work in partnership with various stakeholders in the education community to accomplish this goal, but the Department's newfound commitment to service. Your participation in this workshop, in turn, reflects your commitment to the communities and children you serve.

The purpose of this workshop is to provide information regarding the accountability requirements mandated by both ARIZONA LEARNS and the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). One of my first actions as Superintendent of Public Instruction was to submit legislation in the form of House Bill 2277 that corrected what many deemed an unreasonable and unfair timeline for school improvement. With the passage of House Bill 2277, schools now have one additional year to fully implement school improvement plans and initiatives. Furthermore, this additional year also affords the Department the opportunity to provide increased technical assistance to schools in need of improvement. House Bill 2277 also provides:

- The application of new school classifications. The Achievement Profile will now be utilized to designate schools as ***Excelling, Highly Performing, Performing, Underperforming, and Failing to Meet Academic Standards***. The ambiguous terms of "Improving" and "Maintaining" are no longer applicable, allowing the Department to focus on positive achievement demonstrated by our schools.
- The establishment of an appeals process.
- The establishment of judgment factors. School classifications are not wholly dependent on numbers.

In addition to the legislative amendments made to ARIZONA LEARNS, several methodological changes have been submitted by the Department and subsequently approved by the State Board of Education. These methodological changes serve to strengthen the principles of accuracy and fairness upon which Arizona's system of school accountability is founded. Some of the methodological changes include, but are not limited to:

- The number of students applied in the Achievement Profile analysis (N count) has increased to 30 students per subject/grade combination.

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- The value placed upon Arizona's Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) has increased significantly. Both MAP and Arizona's Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS) now serve as primary academic indicators on the elementary school Achievement Profile. MAP will benefit schools by providing additional points to schools for the 2003 Achievement Profile. The greater emphasis placed on MAP within the Achievement Profile serves to benefit well-run schools located in low-income neighborhoods.
- Mobile students are no longer included in the Achievement Profile analysis. Students must be with you a year to count in the measurement.

Furthermore, in recognizing that the current ARIZONA LEARNS model does not offer incentives for schools to increase the academic achievement of average and above average students, the Department is presently developing a methodology that will provide incentives to schools demonstrating an increase in the absolute academic achievement levels of our average and above average students.

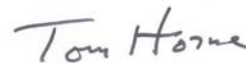
During the development of the Federal accountability plan, as required by NCLB, the Department successfully negotiated several key conditions that will greatly benefit Arizona's districts and schools. These conditions include, but are not limited to:

- The minimum student count (N count) applied in the analysis of adequate yearly progress (AYP) is set at 30 students for all student groups.
- The "plateau" setting of the state's annual target percentage means that schools not currently below the cut score need to first show progress in the fourth year.
- The application of a statistical procedure (99 percent confidence interval) will ensure the accuracy of AYP determinations.

The Department also successfully negotiated an important appeals process for AYP determinations. The appeals process for AYP determinations, however, must be completed within a very short period of time beginning on August 29, 2003.

I know the information provided to you during the Accountability Communications Workshop and in the associated materials will help you and your staff as preparations for the new academic year begin. I also hope that you will disseminate the information provided during the workshop and in the related materials to the various stakeholders in your local community. As we strive to accomplish our shared goal of increasing student academic achievement, we must remember that communication and cooperation are the keys to success.

Sincerely,



Tom Horne